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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001431

SIPDIS

NSC FOR C. BARTON
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/08/2013

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SUBJECT: FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CHADERTON STICKS TO MESSAGE

CLASSIFIED BY: AMB. CHARLES A. SHAPIRO FOR REASON 1.4 (D).

11. (C) THE AMBASSADOR HAD BREAKFAST WITH FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER, NOW AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO FRANCE, ROY CHADERTON APRIL 22. CHADERTON LAMENTED THE POOR STATE OF U.S.-VENEZUELA RELATIONS, AND BLAMED THE SITUATION ON SCHEMING COLOMBIANS AND ON MEDIA OWNERS LIKE GUSTAVO CISNEROS. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD CHADERTON STRONGLY THAT RELATIONS ARE POOR BECAUSE OF PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ. THE PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA HAS BEEN IMPLACABLY HOSTILE TOWARD THE UNITED STATES, HAS INSULTED PRESIDENT BUSH, AND HAS THREATENED TO CUT OFF OIL SALES TO THE U.S., THE AMBASSADOR REMINDED THE FORMER MINISTER. TO TRY TO BLAME POOR RELATIONS ON COLOMBIAN ACCUSATIONS THAT VENEZUELA IS ASSISTING THE FARC OR ON MEDIA OWNERS, COMPLAINTS ABOUT INFRINGEMENT ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS SPECIOUS, THE AMBASSADOR SAID.

12. (C) SEVERAL TIMES, CHADERTON RETURNED TO POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING COOPERATION IN SPECIFIC TECHNICAL AREAS. EACH TIME, THE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT THE ISSUE IS AN INCREASINGLY AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT THAT COMMITS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND TAKES REVENGE AGAINST PEOPLE WHO SIGNED THE PETITIONS FOR THE RECALL REFERENDUM, AND A PRESIDENT WHO INSULTS THE UNITED STATES AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. WHEN CHADERTON REITERATED HIS LAMENT ABOUT THE NON-DEMOCRATIC NATURE OF THE OPPOSITION, THE AMBASSADOR TOLD HIM HIS ANALYSIS WAS OUT OF DATE, THAT THE OPPOSITION HAD EVOLVED, HAD MATURED AND HAD SIDELINED THE MORE RADICAL, COUP PLOTTING GROUPS, LIKE THE "BLOQUE DEMOCRATICO." SINCE THE MAY 29, 2003 OAS AGREEMENT, THE AMBASSADOR NOTED, THE OPPOSITION HAD FOCUSED ON THE RECALL REFERENDUM ONLY TO HAVE THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CNE) STEAL THE SIGNATURE VERIFICATION PROCESS UNDER GOV ORDERS. YOU CANNOT PICK YOUR OPPOSITION; THE OPPOSITION SELECTS ITS OWN LEADERSHIP, THE AMBASSADOR REMINDED THE FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER.

OTHER MATTERS

13. (C) DISCUSSING THE VISIT OF SENATOR BILL NELSON (D-FL), CHADERTON CONCLUDED THAT VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. BERNARDO ALVAREZ MIGHT HAVE BEEN OVER-CONFIDENT IN HIS REPORT TO CARACAS ABOUT WHAT NELSON WOULD SAY PUBLICLY AFTER HIS TRIP. CHADERTON SAID PRESIDENT CHAVEZ INSTRUCTED HIS STAFF TO HOLD AGREEMENT FOR AMBASSADOR BROWNFIELD THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME THAT WE HAD DELAYED AGREEMENT FOR ALVAREZ. CHADERTON ALSO SAID FOREIGN MINISTER JESUS PEREZ HAS BROUGHT BACK FORMER MFA CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION MADRIZ BUSTAMANTE. CHADERTON EXPENDED A GREAT DEAL OF EFFORT GETTING MADRIZ, A RADICAL CHAVISTA, MOVED OUT OF THE MFA, ONLY TO HAVE PEREZ ACQUIESCE IN HIS RETURN. CHADERTON FEARS MADRIZ WILL PURGE THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH THE PROCESS.

COMMENT

14. (C) IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT CHADERTON, NOT HAVING THE PRIZE OF THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY IN PARIS YET IN HAND, HAS NOT CHANGED HIS MESSAGE SINCE LEAVING THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE SPOKE PROUDLY OF HIS LONGSTANDING DISGUST WITH THE VENEZUELAN MEDIA. SEEN THROUGH THIS OPTIC, THE MEDIA ARE TO BLAME FOR VENEZUELA'S PROBLEMS. THE PROBLEM IS THE MEDIA, NOT THE FAILED POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OR CHAVEZ'S HOSTILE RHETORIC TOWARDS ALL WHO ARE NOT PART OF HIS "REVOLUTIONARY" PROCESS. GIVEN CHADERTON'S REPUTATION FOR PROTECTING VENEZUELA'S CAREER DIPLOMATIC SERVICE FROM POLITICIZATION AND FOR UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, HOWEVER, IT IS SURPRISING THAT CANNOT SEE THE NEGATIVE EFFECT OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S HOSTILE RHETORIC ON BILATERAL RELATIONS. NO DOUBT THAT CHAVEZ CAN CONTINUE TO COUNT ON A LOYAL AMBASSADOR WHEN CHADERTON GOES TO EUROPE.
SHAPIRO

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2004CARACA01431 - CONFIDENTIAL